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# The Winding Road



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## Chapter 1 by GeneralSh

How drunk were you last night? You wake up, rubbing the back of your head, groaning as you lean up, resting on your elbow. Then you realize where you are.

A winding road, stretching endlessly in either direction, with a... darkness... there's something in the forest. You can't see what, but you know It's there, watching you.

Something screams, a shrill, piercing screech, and you turn your head back, panicked, to see a black silhouetted figure barreling full tilt towards you. The way he runs makes him look something out of a horror movie, and you can see his eyes. Blood red. Hungry. Evil.

You barely have enough time to get up and start running before he's right where you were, hands extended at you. His hands are long, bony, and taloned, wickedly curved at the end as it tries to grab you. It screeches again, and crows take off, scattering into the dark night. It's a blood moon, with a jester smile carved into the mood, but you don't notice. You're too terrified.

You run, and run, and run, and run. You're seeing red, your lungs are on fire, every muscle in your body is screaming. You trip over a log, and collapse.

"Oh God NO!!!!" You scream, cowering, your hands, tensed, surrendering to your fate, but nothing happens. You look up, and at a dead end. Nothing. Nothing but the winding road and your mind, the prison of fear.

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Chapter 2 by StanG



It's okay, right? To take my meds with alcohol? Only, this whisky tastes so good and I don't want to stop just so I can breathe again.

The chill air takes hold of my lungs and tears at them, as though each lining of the air sacs has been shredded of tissue, leaving them with no defense against the cold, damp climate.

The road winds forever onward.

I have to walk on whether I wish to or not. I must reach the shack. The whisky helps with my head, but sadly, not my lungs. I can feel the burning as it coats my throat on its way to my stomach and as it reaches its destination, the blistering in my gut, too.

A branch snaps loudly on my right. Hell, what kind of horror movie have I stumbled into? This is so clichéd I might just laugh aloud.

Then the rain starts.

You're kidding me! No way? Rain, too? Oh, man - I might as well be in The Truman Show or some such movie. Corn-y.

A low growl begins to rumble below the hissing of the rain. Woah! Now, THAT is a little disconcerting.

Keep walking - or stumbling - or whatever the hell it is you're doing right now. Just get away from this place. Back to the light. Leave the darkness behind. Quickly now - go.

Gulping more of the amber liquid into my tender belly, hoping the pills I swallowed won't be swamped by the whisky, I pick up the pace a little, hoping to outrun the growl.

It doesn't help - a snarl from close behind my neck sets my hairs on edge. That is too close.

I panic into a full run into the unforgiving blackness. Branches whip into my cheeks wet with

rain and blood, now. My lungs burn fiercely with every inhalation of the sodden air, threatening to give out any second.

About 30 feet in front of me, a dark shape looms out of the misty dampness in the middle of the road, blocking my escape from this horror behind. What can I do?

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What MUST I do?

My ears are assaulted by the most horrifying, blood-curdling scream ever to come from a human throat, stopping me dead in my tracks. I had no idea my body could even make such a noise.

Whatever stands before me must be much worse than whatever pursues from behind. I hurl myself forward.

I cannot stop my headlong race into the dark shape in front of me. Crashing into soggy, clammy meat, another cry escapes my mouth as I make contact with whatever grows beneath the leather raincoat. My mind begins to lose control, along with my body.

I curl up into a protective ball where I fall, protecting my head uselessly with my hands, surrendering to my fate.

Nothing happens but that the darkness recedes, the rain stops. And as I look up, I see the winding road before me, leaving nothing but my mind which holds the prison of fear and draining sanity.

### Chapter 3 by GeneralSh



My lungs finally stop screaming, after what feels like hours. I try to cross into the forest, only to appear on the other side of the road, peering directly into where I've come from. The noises of the follower are coming closer, so I start running, and running, and running. Being alone, I manage to finally take in my surroundings.

The trees are speaking, all telling me to run the other way and give up. The moon's laughing face slowly opens and closes its mouth, and the clouds form a cold shroud over its orange-red face. Birds circle over me, beady red eyes peering down at me with silence and knowing.

I will die here. Tonight. The only question is, how long will I last?

Chapter 4 by Dylan Roseborough

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The force of the rainfall is softened by the thick canopy of leaves but all of the forest's noises are drowned out by the sound of my own breathing. I am alone, the darkness circling me as I wander timidly through the underbrush. They repeatedly dash at me, darting over my head in in

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attempt to make screams escape my lips. They're trying to distract me from the horrid growl chasing me through this dark green hell.

"SHOO!" I whisper loudly at them so as not to alert the mysterious beast to my presence within his domain. They caw louder and I begin to wave sticks at them. This deters them for a time but their fear of the stick quickly lessens as my arms tire and fall to my sides.

Tears fall from my rain-soaked face as I fall to my knees on the moss covered floor of the forest.

"Why me?" I look up at the birds. They've stopped on a branch just above my head. Yet no answer comes from them, they only cock their head quizzically as if to respond with "Who else?"

As I slump against the seemingly ancient trunk of an oak tree, I notice the rain has stopped and a fog is quickly setting in. The thought of being lost in a thick fog terrifies me and this fear escalates as I realize that not only will I be lost in a giant cloud, I'll be lost in a giant cloud with the hate of a thousand burning souls chasing me in the form of a giant beast. My only hope is that I am forgotten by the world. Is it not better to die alone in terrifying peace than to die loved and be grieved over?

The only friend I've ever had is the bottle and now it betrays me as it's nowhere in sight. One sip, that's all I want as the sounds of howls grow nearer. I ready myself for the eternal blackness and close my eyes in acceptance of my unfortunate fate.

## Chapter 5 by Jess Ash



There is nothing. A sharp pain rips through my chest, but I am too numb to cry out, too numb to scream anymore. I simply want it to be over. I want to die, to stop living this horror. Anything is preferable to this.

Suddenly, I am falling. Out of my body, out of my mind. An endless fall, tumbling head over heels through the void. I jerk my eyes open, trying to glimpse anything through the endless veil of black. The darkness is stifling, choking the air from my lungs. My throat feels shredded from the

screaming, and each shallow breath rips at its little more, each breath painfully into my body, the ache of my throat catching up to me. I want to see my surroundings once again.

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I almost cry when I see the forest in front of me. The universe sounds like it's mocking me.

Anything, you say? ANYTHING is preferable to this? Shall we TEST that?

Tears stream freely down my face, and I become aware of a stinging in my left palm. Through blurred vision, I can see a red stickiness coating my hand and arm. The whiskey bottle is broken nearby, a shard embedded in my flesh.

Somehow, I have moved. No longer am I sitting against the trunk of a tree. It is a pile of wood, and I can feel the individual logs pressing against my spine. My head turns, trying to catch a glimpse of anything through the fog.

Ahead, through the mist, I spot a dark shape. When it does not move after several second's observation, I set it as my destination.

Cradling my injured hand to my chest, I move toward my new goal. The going is slow, as the running has left me exhausted. The mist is cool against my face, and my clothes are still damp from the earlier rain. I am wet and shivering, making my way through what appears to be Hell. As I approach, the shape materializes into a small house. Lights are on in the windows. Smoke comes from the chimney. A strangled sob comes from my mouth as I approach.

My right hand knocks, the left remaining close to my chest. Occasionally, the glass bumps into my sternum as my hands shake, sending shooting pains up my arm. In the cold, I wait for someone to answer.

## Chapter 6 by Red



For the first time in a while I feel hope. How long have I been here? Not that it matters. My cut hand has gone numb. A flicker of movement in the woods sparks my attention. No, no, not now. I bang on the wooden door with my good hand.

The cold metal handle won't turn. The dark shape is now coming closer. It contrasts itself, walking towards me slowly instead of sprinting. Someone moved in the cabin.

Please, please open, I begged silently. He was getting closer. I could see wickedly sharp teeth smiling and claws outstretched. Only about twenty feet away he stood, opening his jaw to an inhuman level and screaming his dreadful scream.

The door flew open at the noise and I fell in. My eyes closed as I hit the ground and I gracefully

passed out.

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Chapter 7 by Abyss

I was only aware of the inky darkness surrounding me. My eyes were closed, but I knew I was not alone. I could feel the presence of others, their eyes like knives cutting through the shadows. Soon, a foul taste danced in the back of my throat, and rhythmic aches echoed

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through my bruised body. In this dark environment, there was only the fragile silence, shattered only by my slow breathing. The smell of old, rotten wood brought me closer to the surface of the shadows, and soon I awoke. With tired eyes and blurry vision, I glanced at my surroundings. My hands brushed against the soft silky covers of the bed I was laying on. The room was very plain, with wooden panelling for walls and floors. In a corner, three black wax candles illuminated the room, driving back the dancing shadows.

With a groan, I stood shakily. A tall wooden door greeted me, along with a rusty iron doorknob. Filled with dread, I gripped the doorknob with clammy hands, staining my fingers with the orange-brown rust. With a slow twist, I shoved the door open to be greeted with an all-too-familiar scene.

A thick fog had settled around me, wrapping its smoky tendrils around the dead, bald trees of the forest. In the distance, I made out a narrow clearing. Filled with anxiety and fear, and slowly crept through the forest, careful not to make a sound.

The winding road greeted me yet again. Was this fate? Was this my punishment, my eternal torment? I expected unquenchable flames, spirit worms and cackling devils, not mind games! I was on the verge of snapping. Cold sweat covered my forehead and the road began to spin. What did I do to deserve this? What cruel entity subjected me to this construct of neverending torture? Was it for fun? For entertainment? Or was there a deeper meaning, a deeper message? I stared down the winding road. Fog concealed the destination I would reach if I travelled along the road. I turned back to see that the "cabin" was still standing there. The door was shut. I didn't remember shutting the door, and that sent a chill down my spine. However, perhaps there was some sort of clue in there that I missed whilst in my sleepy daze. I would have to trek through the forests though. Who's to say that damn creature wasn't stalking about? A small, soft but unmistakable crack of a branch reached my ears. What was that? Could it be? I could not identify the source of the sound, and was afflicted. To revisit the dreaded cabin and risk a slow and painful death at the chance of a clue, or to travel down the winding road without a clue as to where I was going?

## Chapter 8 by Glendo



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Once inside, I had time to think a little more carefully. If that...thing came for me again, I would have no way to fight it. That was a first priority. If I could find a weapon, I would be halfway there. It would have to be something easy to wield, especially since one of my hands was out of use-

But wait: didn't I just open the door with my cut hand? I wasn't aware of any pain. I looked at my left palm again, but this time there was no sign of a wound, not even a scar. What? There had to have been. I knew I'd hurt that hand; the glass shard from the whisky bottle was the culprit for my injury, and there was no doubting that.

Confused, I walked further into the cabin. There was a small table here, and upon it was-

My whisky bottle. It was not broken. There was not even a chip in the glass. Did I just hallucinate it? Was my mind so laden with fear that I'd convinced myself of this? Surely not. I know what I saw.

Frustration begins to brew in the fetid soup that was once my mind. There was no worse way to go than this, surely...

My eyes strayed from the table to the clock that had chimed. It was a grandfather clock, mahogany in body, with a polished surface and gleaming face. I watched it tick for a few seconds, seeing the remaining moments of my life drain before my very eyes...

I shook my head violently, refusing to accept such a fate. A small spark of courage welled up from within, and I spent the next minute searching the cabin for any items of use or clues to get out of here, all the while conscious of the monotonous tick-tock that would lead to my grave.

Suddenly, from outside, I heard a deathly shriek that curdled my blood. The creature was nearby. I was a dead man.

There was a knock at the door. I glanced around desperately for a weapon and settled for the whisky bottle, and then stenned furtively towards the door. Whoever was there was now set

upon banging on it furiously, as if their life depended on it. It was not the beast. It was its prey.

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had let me in? Was it a friend? Or was it something worse than that hellish fiend that lay in wait outside?

Refreshed with a wave of horror, a cold sweat prompted me to act. I dragged the visitor- some drunkard, by the looks of him- onto the bed. As I covered him with the sheets, I noticed he had a red mark on his left palm. And, I dreadfully realised, this mark signified the entry point of a jagged shard of glass that jutted out of the stranger's hand.

But it wasn't a stranger, I realised. It was me. Helpless, wanting a kind folk to offer his hospitality and respite from the creature. Though he was a man, his demeanour was that of a scared, lonely child. A tear came to my eye as I synchronised my emotions with his own. I could not help him. I was just as vulnerable as he was. We were both going to die miserably and slowly as that demon feasted upon our writhing corpses. Yes, we may as well be corpses now. There was nothing we could do but wait for it to come for us. It had no sense of mercy. It would make us stay here forever, always scared and alone, always aware of Death's groping hand...

As I closed my eyes in despair, I was certain I heard the muffled sound of a voice, saying, "I'm getting you out of there," but I paid little heed. This was the end, for me and for my unconscious other. Even while I drifted off to a restless sleep, I got the feeling of a hand reaching down and picking me up-

\*

A blinding light woke me. It was the first true light I'd seen in a while. All around me was white, and the room I was in was sterile and clean. My ears strained to hear the beast's scream again, but it was not there. Where was I?

"It's all right," came a familiar voice.

I looked up to see a smiling figure stood over me. He resembled the drunkard, but he was a lot cleaner and brighter in the face. His hope had been rekindled.

"It must've been scary out there on your own, was it?"

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I nodded.

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"Don't worry," he said, "You're safe now."



I smiled for the first time, assuring myself that I really was safe.

The smiling man, who was really just me, spoke again.

"How drunk were you last night?" He asked, looking out of the room's window.

My eyes widened in horror as I followed his gaze. Out there, rubbing the back of his head, was a man that I recognised. He groaned as he leaned up, resting on his elbow.

He was stood on a winding road, stretching endlessly in each direction, and now it was his turn to die.

the end

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